

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 13866 01 OF 02 010657Z
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CINCPACT
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 13866

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: THE JANATA PARTY: STILL DIVIDED BUT NO
SPLIT LIKELY

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. SIX MONTHS AFTER THE DESAI GOVERN-
MENT ASSUMED OFFICE, THE JANATA PARTY ON WHICH IT IS BASED
REMAINS A FRAGMENTED ORGANIZATION. WHAT WERE ONCE HOPEFULLY
DESCRIBED AS THE NEW PARTY'S "TEETHING TROUBLES" HAVE COME
TO BE REGARDED AS ENDEMIC PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS THAT JANATA
WILL EVENTUALLY EVOLVE INTO A WELL-INTEGRATED POLITICAL BODY
SEEM TO BE RECEDING. DESPITE THIS, MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE
THAT AS LONG AS THE PRIME MINISTER REMAINS ALIVE AND WELL,
THUS SPARING THE PARTY A SUCCESSION STRUGGLE, JANATA IS LIKELY
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 13866 01 OF 02 010657Z

TO HOLD TOGETHER, ITS INTERNECINE BATTLES PERSISTING WITH
VARYING INTENSITY. WE SHARE THIS VIEW. END INTRODUCTION
AND SUMMARY.

1. DIFFERENCES WITHIN JANATA CONTINUE TO BE ROOTED FOR THE
MOST PART, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY, IN THE DIVERGENT ORGANIZA-
TIONAL ORIGINS OF ITS LEADERS AND RANK AND FILE. ALTHOUGH

JANATA ABSORBED ITS CONSTITUENT PARTIES (AND THE CONGRESS FOR DEMOCRACY, CFD) IN MAY, LEADERS CONTINUE TO BE IDENTIFIED, AND TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, WITH THEIR OLD GROUPS. PAST ALLEGIANCE CONTINUES TO BE A KEY ELEMENT IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICE. EFFORTS TO BRING TOGETHER ANCILLARY ORGANIZATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE FORMER CONSTITUENT PARTIES IN SUCH FIELDS AS LABOR, SOCIAL WORK, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS, SEEN BY MANY IN THE PARTY AS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN FORGING GREATER JANATA UNITY, HAVE NOT GOTTEN OFF THE GROUND. THE PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE, WHICH MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT INTO JANATA NEW PEOPLE NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE OLDER GROUPS, HAS STALLED AMID ACCUSATIONS THAT REGISTRATION FORMS HAD BEEN CORNERED BY THE RESPONSIBLE GENERAL SECRETARY, THE PROMINENT JANA SANGHI NANAJI DESHMUKH, IN AN EFFORT TO BUILD UP JANA SANGH STRENGTH IN THE ORGANIZATION.

2. AMONG THE "FORMER CONSTITUENT PARTIES" IN THE JANATA, THE JANA SANGH AND THE BHARATIYA LOK DAL (BLD) REMAIN THE TWO MOST POWERFUL. THEY HAVE, IF ANYTHING, INCREASED THEIR STRENGTH SINCE THE UNITED PARTY WAS FORMALLY ESTABLISHED. THEIR WORKING ARRANGEMENT, UNDER WHICH THEY WERE ABLE TO DIVIDE BETWEEN THEMSELVES THE NORTH INDIAN CHIEF MINISTERSHIPS FOLLOWING THE JUNE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, SHOWS SOME SIGNS OF STRAIN, BUT BASICALLY THEY APPEAR TO REMAIN ON GOOD TERMS.

3. THE JANA SANGH IS THE STRONGER OF THE TWO. ITS WELL-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 13866 01 OF 02 010657Z

DISCIPLINED AND DEVOTED WORKERS ARE AN IMPORTANT ASSET, AND ITS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE RASHTRIYASWAYAM SEVAK SANGH (RSS) GIVES IT A UNIQUE SOURCE OF STRENGTH OUTSIDE THE JANATA FRAMEWORK. (THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JANATA AND THE RSS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST PUBLICIZED OF THE CONFLICTS WITHIN THE PARTY. THE RSS HAS DECLINED TO DISBAND, MERGE WITH OTHER "VOLUNTEER" ORGANIZATIONS, OR ACCEPT A RELATIONSHIP TO THE JANATA SIMILAR TO THE ONE IT HAD WITH THE JANA SANGH. DESPITE CALLS FROM NON-JANA SANGH ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY, AND FROM JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN, IT HAS SUCCESSFULLY HELD TO ITS STAND, WINNING THE PRIME MINISTER'S ACCEPTANCE FOR IT.) ITS POWER HAS BEEN AUGMENTED BY ITS HOLD ON THE CHIEF MINISTERSHIPS OF RAJASTHAN, MADHYA PRADESH, AND HIMACHAL. AT THE SAME TIME, THE JANA SANGH GROUP IS NOT THE MONOLITHIC JUGGERNAUT SOME OF ITS CRITICS FEAR IT TO BE. THERE ARE DIVISIONS WITHIN IT BETWEEN THOSE CLOSELY LINKED WITH THE RSS AND THOSE WHO TAKE A MORE INDEPENDENT LINE.

4. THE BLD IS A GROUP BASED PRINCIPALLY ON THE YEOMAN PEASANTRY, NOTABLY THE JATS, IN UTTAR PRADESH, RAJASTHAN, AND HARYANA. IT IS PREEMINENTLY THE PARTY OF HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH, WHOSE POWERFUL CABINET POSITION AND DOMINEER-

ING PERSONALITY ARE KEY ASSETS FOR IT. CHARAN SINGH PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN SELECTING BLD CHIEF MINISTERS FOR UP, HARYANA, AND BIHAR, AND THEY LOOK TO HIM FOR LEADERSHIP. THE OLD BLD ALSO INCLUDED PROMINENT LEADERS WHO ENTERED IT FROM THE SWAT-ANTRA PARTY AND AN ORISSA BRANCH WHICH OWED ALLEGIANCE TO THE PRESENT UNION STEEL MINISTER, BIJU PATNAIK, AND NOW CONTROLS THE GOVERNMENT OF THAT STATE. IN THE POLITICAL ARITHMETIC OF THE JANATA PARTY, THESE ELEMENTS ARE NO LONGER GROUPED WITH THE BLD, NOW VIRTUALLY SYNONYMOUS WITH CHARAN SINGH.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS ARE WEAKER, THOUGH THIS IS SOMEWHAT OBSCURED BY THE ABSENCE TO DATE OF ORGANIZATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE OLD CONGRESS (O) HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF SEATS IN THE UNION
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PAGE 04 NEW DE 13866 01 OF 02 010657Z

CABINET. BUT ASIDE FROM GUJARAT, IT DOES NOT HAVE A STRONG TERRITORIAL BASE IN ANY AREA NOW RULED BY JANATA GOVERNMENTS AND ITS STATE LEADERS WERE SINGULARLY UNSUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ASSEMBLY ELECTION EFFORTS TO EXPAND THE JANATA (AND THEIR OWN) BASES IN WEST BENGAL AND TAMILNADU. THE FORMER SOCIALISTS INCLUDE SOME OF THE MOST TALENTED AND ARTICULATE OF THE JANATA LEADERSHIP BUT HAVE ONLY A LIMITED MASS FOLLOWING FOCUSED IN SCATTERED POCKETS. THE CFD GROUP HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST LOSER IN THE MERGER. THE DEFECTION IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS OF SIZEABLE HARIJAN SUPPORT WHICH HAD VOTED FOR JANATA IN THE LOK SABHA CONTEST HAS WEAKENED THE POSITION OF ONE OF ITS FOUNDERS, DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM. ANOTHER, CHEMICALS MINISTER H.N. BAHUGUNA, HAS BEEN CUT TO SIZE IN HIS U.P. HOME BASE BY CHARAN SINGH'S FORCES AND A THIRD, FORMER ORISSA CHIEF MINISTER NANDINI SATPATHY, HAS BEEN ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. THE GROUP OF DISSIDENT CONGRESSMEN NOW IN JANATA HOLDS THE PARTY PRESIDENCY BUT ITS FOLLOWING IS ALSO LIMITED.

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 13866 02 OF 02 010736Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 13866

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6. AS THIS BRIEF REVIEW SUGGESTS, THE FORMER JANA SANGHIS AND THE BLD GROUP WITHIN THE JANATA ARE LARGELY SATISFIED WITH THEIR POSITIONS. OTHER ELEMENTS, NOTABLY THE SOCIALISTS AND THE CFD, ARE DISCONTENT, THE LATTER PARTICULARLY SO. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THERE HAS BEEN A TENDENCY, PARTICULARLY IN UP AND HARYANA, FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVED WHAT THEY BELIEVED INADEQUATE CONSIDERATION AT THE HANDS OF THE DOMINANT JANA SANGH/BLD GROUP TO COOPERATE IN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THEIR POSITION. THESE STATE ATTITUDES ARE REFLECTED SOMEWHAT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AMONG PARLIAMENTARIANS BELONGING TO THE FAVORED AND DISADVANTAGED UNITS. BUT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO THINK OF JANATA AS A PARTY NEATLY DIVIDED INTO CONTENDING FACTIONS GROUPED AROUND JANA SANGH/BLD AND "THE REST". NOR CAN WE DETECT ANY DIVISION OF THE DESAI CABINET
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 13866 02 OF 02 010736Z

ALONG THESE LINES.

7. THAT OLD ALLEGIANCES SHOULD CONTINUE SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE. IN THE VIEW OF MANY OBSERVERS, WHICH WE SHARE, THE ODDS AGAINST EARLY INTEGRATION WERE SIGNIFICANTLY LENGTHENED BY THE WAY IN WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE DETERMINED FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY CONTESTS. THEY WERE MADE LONGER BY THE PROCESS OF STATE GOVERNMENT SELECTION WHICH FOLLOWED. WHAT IS MORE DISCOURAGING TO THOSE WHO FAVOR A STABLE, TWO-PARTY GOVERNMENT IN INDIA IS THAT THE DIVISIONS ARE SEEMINGLY BECOMING STRONGER AND INCREASINGLY VISIBLE. THEY POSE A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS FOR THE PARTY.

8. ONE CONCERNS THE JANATA'S IMAGE. CONSTANT INFIGHTING STEMMING FROM FACTIONAL DIVISIONS, AS WELL AS FROM CASTE AND

PERSONAL DIFFERENCES SOMETIMES BUT NOT ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM, HAS HELPED PRODUCE A FEELING OF DISILLUSION WITH THE PARTY. FOR MANY, POLITICAL PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH JANATA SEEM LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE PERIOD OF CONGRESS DOMINATION. THE ATTENTION PARTY LEADERS HAVE PAID TO BOLSTERING THEIR OWN GROUP'S POSITION AND WARDING OFF CHALLENGES FROM OTHERS HAS ALSO HAD OBVIOUS IMPACT ON THE EFFICIENCY OF STATE GOVERNMENTS, FURTHER DAMAGING PARTY PRESTIGE. WE ALSO SUSPECT THAT THE DIVISIONS ON ECONOMIC POLICY WITHIN A PARTY COMPRISING SUCH DIVERGENT GROUPS AS TRADER-BASED FREE ENTERPRISING JANA SANGHIS, BLDERS WHO CHAMPION AN EMPHASIS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SOCIALISTS, INTER ALIA, HAVE BEEN SHARPENED BY THE PERSISTENCE OF FAC-TIONAL LINES, CONTRIBUTING TO THE DELAY THE JANATA HAS EXPERIENCED IN FORMULATING GUIDELINES. THE PARTY'S DIFFICULTY IN SPREADING BEYOND ITS NORTH INDIAN HEARTLAND, A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR IT, HAS ALSO BEEN HEIGHTENED BY ITS DIVISIONS.

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 13866 02 OF 02 010736Z

9. PRIME MINISTER DESAI HAS SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY AGAINST DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PARTY AND HAS WARNED THAT A SPLIT IN JANATA WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR THE COUNTRY. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT HE IS BEGINNING TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN PARTY AFFAIRS RATHER THAN TO LEAVE THE MANAGEMENT OF JANATA LARGELY IN THE HANDS OF ITS PRESIDENT, CHANDRA SHEKHAR. THE PM'S REAL CONTRIBUTION TO PARTY UNITY, IT SEEMS TO US, DERIVES FROM THE UNCHALLENGED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP HE HAS COME TO ENJOY IN THE SIX MONTHS HE HAS BEEN IN POWER. HIS PREEMINENT POSITION AND CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE WAY THE CABINET MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER HAVE INHIBITED THE FORMATION OF FACTIONS WITHIN THE CABINET AND HAS OBIATED THE FURTHER FACTIONAL PROBLEMS WHICH INTRIGUES DESIGNED TO TOPPLE HIM WOULD BRING ABOUT. THERE ARE NO DOUBT MANY WHO ARE THINKING ABOUT THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE WHICH THE 81-YEAR OLD PRIME MINISTER'S DEATH OR INCAPACITY WOULD SET IN TRAIN, BUT SO FAR WE HAVE SPOTTED NO EVIDENCE OF ANY LINING UP OF FORCES IN PREPARATION FOR THAT EVENT.

10. WE REMAIN PERSUADED THAT PREDICTIONS OF A SPLIT IN JANATA ARE PREMATURE. IN OUR VIEW, ALL OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF SOME SCATTERED INDIVIDUALS, WILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE BETTER OFF REMAINING WITHIN THE PARTY THAN BRAVING THE UNCERTAINTIES WHICH A SPLIT COULD BRING ABOUT. WE THINK THIS IS AS TRUE OF THE STRONGER ELEMENTS AS IT IS OF THE DISGRUNTLED GROUPS. THE FORMER, AND MOST NOTICEABLY THE JANA SANGHIS, SEEM CONVINCED THAT TIME IS ON THEIR SIDE AND WILL SEE LITTLE ADVANTAGE IN PRECIPITATING A CRISIS. THE LATTER ARE LIKELY TO REGARD THE LIMITED SHARE IN GOVERNMENT THEY NOW ENJOY

AS PREFERABLE TO THE RISKS OF FINDING NEW COALITION PARTNERS TO IMPROVE THEIR POSITIONS. THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE GOI EXERCISED BY THE PM, THE MORAL FORCE OF NARAYAN, AND THE AWARENESS THAT PUBLIC OPINION MAY NOT LOOK KINDLY ON THOSE WHO BREAK UP THE PARTY SHOULD REINFORCE THIS ASSESSMENT.

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PAGE 04 NEW DE 13866 02 OF 02 010736Z

11. THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO UNDERGO SERIOUS STRAINS. ONE WILL COME WHEN PARTY ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE. (ALL JANATA OFFICIALS ARE NOW NOMINATED, AND SOME STATE BODIES ARE STILL FUNCTIONING UNDER THE COMMITTEES SET UP TO FIGHT THE ELECTIONS. AD HOC COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN NAMED IN SOME STATES.) ON PRESENT FORM, THESE ARE LIKELY TO CONFIRM THE STRONG POSITION OF THE JANA SANGH AND THE BLD. A FURTHER SPLIT IN CONGRES, IF FOLLOWED BY THE APPLICATION OF ONE OF ITS DIVIDED WING FOR JANATA MEMBERSHIP, WOULD ALSO POSE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE PARTY: SOME WOULD SEE IN IT A POSSIBLE OCCASION FOR A REALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL FORCES WHICH WOULD BETTER THEIR STANDINGS. (IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THERE WILL IN TIME BE SOME REALIGNMENT OF FORCES WITHIN JANATA, PERHAPS ALONG LEFT VS. RIGHT LINES, BLURRING THE PRESENT DIVISIONS AMONG FORMER CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS.) OUR PRESENT READING IS THAT JANATA WILL CONTINUE TO MUDDLE THROUGH THESE AND OTHER STRESSES AT LEAST UNTIL THE DEPARTURE OF THE PM PROVOKES A STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESSION. THIS WILL BE ITS GREATEST CHALLENGE, BUT IT COULD BE A LONG WAY DOWN THE ROAD.
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